

THE FIRST GREY CUP: 1909

By Robert Sproule

Finally, after much discussion Lord Earl Grey, then Governor- General of Canada, donated a cup for "amateur" competition in Canadian senior rugby foot-ball. For once and for all, this cup was to decide a true national champion, starting in 1909.

It was for only those teams in good standing with the governing body of football, the Canadian Rugby Union. It really affected only unions in eastern Canada, from Montreal to Hamilton. They were the Inter-Provincial Rugby Foot-Ball Union (the Big Four), the Inter-Collegiate Rugby Foot-Ball Union, and the Ontario Rugby Foot-Ball Union, the oldest of the three.

The Big Four ended their schedule with two teams tied for first place. Ottawa Rough Riders went through the season almost undefeated, but dropped their last game to the Hamilton Tigers 30-5. Ottawa's loss gave the Tabbies a share of first place, with both clubs tied with 5-1 won-lost records. The playoff match was held at a neutral field in Toronto. With the kicking of the great Jack Williams, Riders outscored Hamilton 14-8 before 7,000 excited fans to capture the IRFU title. They prepared to advance against University of Toronto, the college champs.

Actually, Tigers had been confident in playing Ottawa, and had looked forward to a rematch with Varsity, whom they had defeated in the 1908 championship game, 21-17. They were so confident of meeting the students again that they had devised a special defence to contain Smirle Lawson, the big plunger of the college league. But Ottawa was first, and the Tigers would have to wait until next year.

The Ontario Union came down to Toronto Parkdale Canoe Club and Toronto Amateur Athletic Association, both clubs tied with 3-1 records. In the playoff, Parkdale defeated Toronto AAA 8-3. Under the guidelines of the Grey Cup Executive, they automatically advanced into the title match. The winner of Ottawa at Varsity would play them for the Cup.

Rough Riders should have been better prepared for the college kids, especially Smirle Lawson, but they weren't. During the regular season Lawson was indeed the first of the "Big Train" runners. In one game he scored four touch-downs and in another he took a punt and returned it 95 yards for a score.

When the two teams met (before a record 10,000 fans), Lawson had a field day. He ran for 195 yards and one score. He also had eleven punt returns for 115 yards, including a major score. Riders were held to 89 total yards, while Varsity rambled for 373 en route to a commanding 31-7 victory over the Capital City boys.

So high was the football fever that many people thought this was the championship game and the final match of the season. But there was still a contest with Parkdale scheduled for Saturday,

December 4. Under these rather anticlimactic circumstances, only 3,800 were present at Rosedale Field, Toronto, for the first Grey Cup game.

Under cloudy skies and above-freezing temperatures, referee W.B. Hendry got the teams to line up at 2:30 p.m.

Varsity won the toss and elected to play in the west side of the field and kick off. Bill Ritchie of Varsity toed the ball to Percy Killaly, who took a few steps and returned to Newton, who was tackled at the Parkdale 30-yard line. Runs through the line failed to gain much. On a return kick, Hughie Gall passed the leather to Dixon, who ran 20 yards through the Parkdale line. An injury to Cromar delayed the game a few minutes, but on resumption of play, Varsity moved to the 10-yard line. Lawson tried to buck but fumbled the ball to the Canoe Club.

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Right half-back Killaly punted to Thomson, who fumbled back to Varsity. Gall kicked across the field but Addison secured some 20 yards out. A punt to Gall at centre field was slippery and he fumbled, but the ball was dribbled into touch for the students. From scrimmage Gall kicked to the quarter line, but the ball was kicked back to him near centre field. A 65-yard kick by Gall went to Brady, who was tackled behind the line for a rouge. Varsity drew first blood and led 1-0.

Parkdale punted to centre and the collegiates worked the return some 20 yards. Another kick by Gall and the return was held at the 10 yard line. On first down Parkdale made a gain but lost it in a mix-up to Varsity. The oval came to Gall and he ran around the end for a touch-down. Ritchie missed the goal from a difficult angle. Varsity now had six points.

Per the rules of the day, the Canoe Club kicked off from centre field and Varsity returned the kick to Brady, who muffed. In the mix-up Referee Hendry awarded the ball to Varsity. Gall tried another quick kick but Cromar cut back against the tacklers and made a fine 30-yard run down the sideline. During the kick-over, Hume, the left middle wing of Toronto University, was laid out and play was stopped. The ball was heeled back to the quarter-back Billy Foulds who passed to Gage. Gage broke off a 25-yard run.

After another exchange of punts Brockbank of Parkdale started a dribble from a loose ball and it went into touch at Varsity's 20-yard mark. Shortly the whistle blew to end the first quarter.

Another kick-over was returned to Killaly, who fumbled. Varsity recovered, but the ball was called back, as yards had not been allowed on the return. Parkdale carried the oval past centre on a mass play, which was simply a fullback run up the middle. Varsity recovered a fumble and from scrimmage Gall punted to Brady, who was stopped 30 yards out. On a return to centre, the students tried a pass-out to Lawson, who ran into touch after a 15-yard run.

Gall tried another kick over the line. Brady fumbled but the referee called Varsity for not giving yards for a return. Cromar secured a Parkdale onside kick and ran 20 more yards to carry play into collegiate territory. Soon play went back to Parkdale's end, but Barber, their wingman, was distinguishing himself by his effective tackling of Lawson. Thus far the Big Train had failed to get in any of his long sprints.

Harper was hurt, but continued to play. Dixon dropped a pass from scrimmage and Parkdale recovered inside the quarter line. Killaly punted to Gall, who fumbled but fell on the leather just over his line. Foulds lateralled back to Gall for an end-run play. The pass was off target and Meaghan fell on it for Parkdale's first score of the match. The convert attempt was unsuccessful, but Varsity's lead was narrowed to 6-5.

After several more scrimmages, Gall tried to kick over the goal-line, but Cromar ran the ball out with little problem. Again both clubs exchanged kicks, but failed to gain yards from scrimmage.

Finally, half-time came and the players retreated to their benches. Varsity, after their great game with Ottawa, had somewhat expected a walkover. Parkdale, on the other hand, were simply out to stop a smothering defeat. Nevertheless, their showing in the first half came as one of the biggest surprises Toronto fans had seen in many years. Varsity had played in the Paddler's end most of the time, but their stubborn defence was altogether unexpected. University fumbles were too frequent and Lawson was several miles from his form at the Ottawa game. Barber, Parkdale's fast outside wingman, in addition to being a blood relative of greased lightning was some "three storeys" in height, and thus very able to collar the big Varsity plunger before he made any getaway runs.

The second half opened with Varsity facing the sun. Ritchie kicked off to Dissette, Parkdale's captain, who kicked back to Lawson. From scrimmage, Muir, a lineman, was put into the back-field and ripped through the line for ten yards. On the next down, Gage repeated the trick. Gall punted to Brady, who was given little chance to return when tackled by Gage. Killaly kicked to Gall to relieve the pressure and the student made a dodging 20-yard punt return.

Lawson broke away for his first effective run -- 25 yards -- and Varsity started to advance. However, Cromar intercepted a lateral pass and trekked 20 yards upfield. Parkdale's half-back, Moore, muffed a pass at his 40-yard line. Thomson was allowed to dribble over and fall on the ball. With Ritchie's goal

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kick, Varsity went ahead 12-5, and it seemed some of Coach Griffith's half time talk had affected the players.

Dissette kicked off to Foulds. who kicked back to mid-field. Parkdale fumbled again and Kingston recovered for the collegiates. Lawson started to break away but Barber nailed him after a good gain. Gall's 50-yard, kick forced Brady to rouge, and the score read 13-5. Varsity continued to press and after starting out on another run Lawson made a flying kick of 45 yards over the line to Killaly. He was tackled by Gage for another rouge. Varsity now had a 14-5 lead.

With Brady off the field for five minutes for tripping and Ross penalized for illegal blocking, Parkdale punted. The long kick went into Varsity's side of the field and Lawson was tackled by Leonard. From a scrim the ball was secured by Foulds, who passed to Lawson. The Big Train made a slashing cross-field run of 20 yards. On the next down, Foulds failed to control a rolling ball and Dissette, playing middle defence, burst in and recovered the ball on Toronto's quarter line. A buck went for ten yards and then Killaly kicked to Dixon, who was rouged. This brought the score to 14-6 for the students.

After a few gains Gall punted and the play went back to the Paddler's end of the field. Varsity held on defence and Parkdale punted back. LaJoie broke away for ten yards, but then Varsity lost on downs. They got the ball again when on a quick kick Cromer booted the leather to Jack Newton at centre. He in turn passed to Gall, who kicked when about to be tackled. Killaly grabbed the pigskin for the Canoe Club and kicked back up the field. Lawson was wide open when he received and made a great 40-yard run. On first down Gall punted over and Brady, on running to the dead line, made it another point for University of Toronto. A minute or so later, Gall kicked a 45-yard rouge to end the third quarter with the score 16-6 for Varsity.

The teams exchanged kicks and Dixon fumbled 20 yards from his goal, but recovered. Again Gall punted to Brady. He muffed at centre field and Thomson was quick on the ball and ran it 25 yards. Hughie Gall wasted no time and kicked to Brady, who was tackled by Muir for another point.

Killaly took the ball from centre and kicked to Dixon, who kicked back to Killaly. On the return kick Dixon threw the oval to Gall and the half-back made a long kick from centre for a touch-in-goal. Varsity's 18th point put the collegiates well in control.

Varsity kept the action constantly at Parkdale's end, but their back division showed steady defensive work. A punt by Killaly finally brought the ball to centre, where Lawson made a fine catch before he was nailed by Meaghan. Toronto kicked over and Foulds caught one of Killaly's punts 30 yards out. He headed for the line but was dropped by Barber's flying tackle. Gall's rouge made the score 19-6.

Moments later Varsity got the ball again. They faked a run and punted a long ball. Newton tackled Brady in the end zone for another rouge. Varsity now lead 20-6.

The Canoe Club was playing a lost game but tried to keep the score down by punting the ball as far as possible downfield and away from their goal. But Varsity made good returns on each kick to allow their backs to move closer to the line. On a down, the ball was heeled to Foulds. He faked a pass to Gall and passed to Lawson, who made a great kick from mid-field. The play forced Parkdale to race back, only to be tackled for another rouge.

From a scrimmage Parkdale tried the same trick play. Killaly made a run to the side, stopped and made a kick down to Toronto's quarter line. Gall was not fooled by the move and backed up to receive the kick. He then made a nice 30-yard sprint, running the ball to Parkdale's 50-yard line.

At this distance the Paddlers knew Gall would kick again, and so when the teams lined up to scrimmage they bunched in, hoping to trap Gall just as he got the ball. There were just moments left in the game and if Gall fumbled, Parkdale was ready to dribble the loose ball downfield and over for a try.

On the count, the leather was kicked out of scrim to Foulds. Parkdale broke through and cornered Gall but the Varsity quarter-back had called Lawson's number. The big guy secured the oval, plowed through the entire Canoe Club team, and then made a 50-yard run for a try. Just as the ball was touched down

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over the line, the officials blew the final whistle to end the first Grey Cup game. No attempt was made to convert the goal.

With the game finally won, Sergeant Armstrong and his 50 men allowed the crowd and college contingents onto the field to surround their champions. Varsity had proved they were the better of the two teams and had become Canada's first true National Rugby Football Champions.

Parkdale had only made "yards" (first downs) five times from scrimmage and gained 110 yards rushing. Varsity finished with "yards" 13 times and almost 300 yards from scrimmage. Smirle Lawson had picked up 126 yards on ten runs. The Paddlers made 32 punts for over 1,000 yards, but were limited to just one single and 65 yards in kick returns. Toronto made 30 kicks for over 1,200 yards but were able to score ten singles. Hughie Gall accounted for eight of these. And Varsity returned punts for 231 yards, with Gall getting 69 yards on eight returns and his teammate Lawson returning seven times for 105 yards.

When Varsity finally woke up in the second half their running and punt return plans put them in good field advantage and constantly put the Canoe Club outfit on the defence. Gall lived up to his title as one of the greatest kickers of all time, and Lawson, with his fireworks run at the end was indeed a great runner. Quarter-back Billy Foulds was a capable field general for the student team and Harry Griffiths was the best coach around.

He was no doubt the best coach in the country, as this was to be the first of three consecutive Grey Cup Championships for the University of Toronto.

And yet, although Canada finally had a national champion, there was no mention of the cup in newspaper reports of the game. It was not presented to Varsity until March of 1910.

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**University of Toronto Varsity at Toronto Parkdale Canoe Club
Saturday, December 4, 1909, 2:30 p.m.
at Rosedale Field, Toronto**

Winds from the west 5 m.p.h. 36 degrees. Dry field, cloudy sky
Referee W.B. Hendry. Umpire W.A. Hewitt

SCORING

First Quarter

Varsity rouge	Gall 65 yd kick	1 pt.
Varsity try	Gall 10 yd run	5

Second Quarter

Parkdale try	Meaghan fum return	5
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Third Quarter

Varsity try	Thomson 40 yd fum ret	5
goal	Ritchie	1
Varsity rouge	Gall 50 yd kick	1
Varsity rouge	Lawson 45 yd kick	1
Parkdale rouge	Killaly 30 yd kick	1
Varsity kick to deadline	Gall 55 yd kick	1
Varsity rouge	Gall 45 yd kick	1

Fourth Quarter

Varsity rouge	Gall 40 yd kick	1
Varsity touch-in-goal	Gall 60 yd kick	1
Varsity rouge	Gall 35 yd kick	1
Varsity rouge	Gall 40 yd kick	1
Varsity rouge	Lawson 55 yd kick	1
Varsity try	Lawson 50 yd run	5

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	1	2	3	4	F	
Varsity	6	0	10	10	---	26
Parkdale	0	5	1	0	---	6

Parkdale	Toronto U
4 First downs by run	13
1 First downs by penalty	0
5 Total first downs	13
110 Yards rushing	292
0 Losses	0
110 Total	292
50 Plays	60
0 Lost on downs	1
2 Number of penalties	2
15 Amount of penalties	20

RUSHING

Parkdale: Killaly 1 for 5 yd, Moore 7 for 22 yd 15 lgt, Brady 8 for 48 yd 15 lgt, Cromer 22 yd 15 lgt, Brady 8 for 48 yd 15 lgt, Cromer 2 for 35 yd 20 lgt. Toronto: Gall 4 for 35 yd 10 lgt 1 TD, Newton 2 for 10 yd 5 lgt, Dixon 4 for 13 yd 5 lgt, LaJoie 2 for 30 yd 20 lgt, Lawson 10 for 126 yd 50 lgt 1 TD, Gage 3 for 30 yd 25 lgt, Muir 3 for 23 yd 10 lgt, Foulds 2 for 15 yd 15 lgt.

PUNTING

Parkdale: Killaly 30 for 1,020 yd 60 lgt 1pt, Cromer 1 for 40 yd, J. Dissette 1 for 35 yd. Toronto: Gall 26 for 1,060 65 lgt 8 pt, Lawson 2 for 100 yd 55 lgt 2 pt, Newson 1 for 35 yd, Foulds 1 for 35 yd.

PUNT RETURNS

Parkdale: Killaly 4 for 15 yd 10 lgt, Brady 5 for 15 yd 10 lgt, Cromer 4 for 35 yd 30 lgt, Addison 1 for 0 yd. Toronto: Gall 8 for 69 yd 30 lgt, Newton 5 for 17 yd 5 lgt, Dixon 5 for 30 yd 20 lgt, LaJoie 0 for -10 yd (on lateral), Lawson 7 for 105 yd 40 lgt, Thomson 1 for 0 yd, Foulds 4 for 20 yd 10 lgt.

KICKOFFS

Parkdale: Dissette 2 for 75 yd 40 lgt. Toronto: Ritchie 2 for 70 yds 40 lgt, Gall 1 for 65 yd.

KICKOFF RETURNS

Parkdale: Killaly 1 for 5 yd, Cromer 1 for 20 yd, Dissette 1 for 5 yd. Toronto: Gall 1 for 5 yd, Foulds 1 for 2 yd.

FUMBLES MADE AND LOST

Parkdale: Killaly 1-1, Moore 3-3, Brady 2-1. Toronto: Gall 1-1, Newton 1-1, Dixon 1-1, Lawson 1-1, Thomson 1-1.

FUMBLE RETURNS

Parkdale: Barber 1 for 0 yd, Meaghan 1 for 0 yd 1 TD, Brockbank 1 for 40 yd, Dissette 1 for 20 yd, Cromer 1 for 20 yd. Toronto: Newton 1 for 0 yd, Gage 1 for 0 yd, Muir 1 for 0 yd, Thomson 2 for 65 yd 40 lgt 1 TD.

Lineups

Parkdale

Brady Full Back
 Killaly Right Half Back
 Cromer Centre Half Back
 Moore Left Half Back
 Dissette(Capt.) QuarterBack
 Leonard Scrimmage
 Addison Scrimmage
 Duncan Scrimmage
 F.Dissette Left Inside Wing
 Ross Left Middle Wing
 Meaghan Left Outside Wing
 Harper Right Inside Wing
 Barber Right Middle Wing
 Brockbank Right Outside Wing

Toronto U

Dixon
 Gall
 Newton
 Lawson
 Foulds
 Ritchie
 Bell
 Jones
 Muir
 Hume
 Park
 Kingston
 LaJoie
 Thornton